1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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Liaalaomir clans, and the Durili and Ding Ding phratries. The last two named are too nebulous in their composition to give their clan membership. Some informants name all the Dua clans as belonging to both, while others place only part of the eastern local units in these groups. 615

The phratry in Murngin society represents a weak attempt within the culture to create new and larger groups than the clan to control the intra-moiety antagonisms. It is an expression of the moiety weakness in controlling the antagonisms of the clans within it. The rivalry for women, as well as the other competitions, excites emotions too strong to be suppressed by phratry solidarity. It is only in the clan that one finds sufficient pressure placed on the antagonisms to prevent open war. 615 587

There is an interesting association between the Warumeri on one side and the Wawilak of the Ritarngo tribe on the other. The two are seventy-five miles apart, a long distance in this culture; yet according to native accounts the black duck totem is supposed to have lived with and performed certain significant acts for each clan in a mythological period, so they are most friendly. Actually, the two do not compete for women, although belonging to the same moiety; but the clans that lie between these two and belong to their moiety do compete, so that the Wawilak and Warumeri have common enemies and like grievances, and possess a convenient myth as a rallying point to express solidarity when associated in warfare against mutual enemies. This association of the two clans, although of considerable importance in their activities, is unnamed and does not class them as a phratry. 614 616 587

The Tribe

The tribes of northeastern Arnhem Land, of which Murngin is one, are very weak social units, and when measured by the ordinary definitions of what constitutes a tribe fail almost completely. The tribe is not the war-making group. On the contrary, it is usually within it that the most intensive feuds are found. Tribal membership of the clans on the borders of two tribes is uncertain and changing, or the people may sometimes insist that they belong to both tribes. Even clans well toward the center of a tribe's territory will, under certain circumstances, range themselves with another group, as will be seen, as we examine in the following paragraphs the Murngin tribe. 619

The name Murngin, as stated, is little used, the principle of dual organization being so strong that the moiety names of a particular

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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totem and clan well, and their names, although somewhat different, are items from the same totemic configuration. They marry under the same rules and regulations and obtain for wives the same social personality (their mother's brother's daughters) and, by the action of the levirate and sororate, sometimes the identical women. In every respect the brothers are equivalent, primarily because of this occupation of the same sociological place in the family of procreation. The equivalence of brothers is one of the basic principles underlying the fundamental structure of the kinship organization.

The brother-sister reciprocal is fundamentally powerful and primarily the same as in Euro-American society. There is also a considerable degree of equivalence between brothers and sisters. They occupy the same generation and same line of descent. From a structural point of view, the horizontal generation line cross-sects the perpendicular patrilineal line at the same point for both the sisters and the brothers. They are therefore from the same totem well, they have the same totems, et cetera, but because of their sexual difference they are not completely equivalent. Further, they marry people who occupy different points within the social kinship structure, which tends to differentiate them.

The marriage of a male ego to his wife is something more than the modern marriage contract to any woman out of a general group. He marries into his wife's family of orientation, a group of four personalities who are his mother's brother, his mother's brother's wife (who is also part of another family), his wife's brother, and his wife's sister, who is also mother's brother's daughter. Ego, then, is constantly looking to his mother's people for his wives while he is a member of his own family of orientation and while forming his family of procreation, and when he has a son he still seeks the father of his mother's group to obtain wives for his male offspring. On the other hand, he has nothing to obtain during childhood and early manhood from his father's side of the family. When he has a daughter old enough for marriage, he wants a son-in-law; but he is then not a seeker but the one sought after by his sister's son, which puts him in a very strong position. To summarize: in his family of orientation he is weak in his relations with his mother's people and strong with his father's; in his family of procreation this still holds true. It is to be noted that on his father's side there are no tabooed collateral relatives with the exception of his sister, who is a part of his own family; but on his mother's side two are taboo: mokul rumeru and momelker. The elementary family tends to

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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and son, maternal uncle and sister's son. Every individual term represents a complex nexus of social behavior which creates a well-defined social personality. Each of these social personalities is but one element of the larger personality of each individual within the whole society, since each male has all the male terms in the kinship system applied to him, and every woman all the female terms.

Each of the reciprocals is considered below in structural order according to patrilineal line. The first relationships considered are those in a man's own line, beginning with those of his own generation—older and younger brother, brother and sister, and sister and sister. We next consider the collateral relatives in the patrilineal lines outside ego's own, beginning with the husband and wife relationship.

Wawa ⟷ *Yukiyuko* (older brother ⟷ younger brother)

The general type of this relationship has several varieties of which the natives are conscious when they use the two general terms. They comprise: (1) Two brothers from the same father and same mother; (2) two brothers from the same father and two mothers who are sisters; (3) from the same mother and two fathers who are brothers; (4) from two fathers who are brothers, and two mothers who are sisters; (5) brothers belonging to the same clan but only tribal in relationship; (6) brothers from nearby clans; (7) brothers from more remote clans and tribes. The intensity of behavior decreases from the first to the last mentioned; indeed, the last two varieties may have little in common with the other five; yet given normal conditions, the Murngin and other tribes with their type of kinship would consider it wrong if certain, though not all, of the rules regulating this relationship were broken. Hence it will be necessary to differentiate among the various kinds of brothers.[4]

The junior levirate is a prominent mechanism. When an older brother dies the brother next in age and consanguinity receives his wives and becomes father to the children. This is not only a privilege, but a duty. Frequently wives thus acquired, being past the age of bearing children or gathering food, are really an economic liability to the heir; yet he must take and look after them.

The junior levirate functions even before the death of the older brother. A gawel (father-in-law) is supposed to give his waku (son-in-law) all the female offspring from his own wives, but there is a

[4] An aborigine, speaking fair English, described the first two varieties as "my proper wawa," the third and fourth as "my proper wawa, but little bit different," the fifth as "close-up wawa," the sixth and seventh as "far-off wawas."

1; Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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593 835 copulating with their wives, thereby forcing the wawa to defend his brother from their vengeance.

607 Because all of the members of a group of brothers are all dué to the same galle and the women thereby are the potential wives of all yukiyukos of this group, there is a strong tribal rule that no yukiyuko can talk to or be near wawa's wives, but wawa can talk to and be near yukiyuko's. (This would not be true of a woman beyond the age when she would be sexually interested in yukiyuko, nor of boys below the age of puberty.) The rule holds against all yukiyukos, near or distant, except where blood brothers are involved who have a tremendous love and trust in each other. Breaking of the rule by blood brothers was observed, but not by tribal brothers.

593 583 587 There is still another method by which the junior levirate operates. A wawa often gives one or two of his younger wives to yukiyuko. These wives may merely be those promised by a gawel and for whom wawa has made presents (wawa would be forced to obtain permission from gawel in this case); or wawa may give yukiyuko wives he has already lived with, in which circumstances permission need not be asked.

If wawa has four or five wives, he may say to a single yukiyuko, "You see that one—you take her and feed her." Yukiyuko usually says, if wawa is an old man, "No, you are an old man. I'll wait until you die, then I'll have them all." Wawa replies, "No, you take her now, yukiyuko. I have many wives and you have none." Yukiyuko then takes her, and she belongs to him permanently. Wawa loses all right to her sexually and economically, and she cannot be returned to him. If yukiyuko died, his new wife would go to his younger brother, even though he were not consanguine but only tribal.

Ordinarily a man would present his younger brother with a wife if particularly pleased with some exploit of yukiyuko's, such as the successful termination of a punitive expedition against common enemies.

593 583 One of Warlumbopo's older brothers (actual) had been ambushed and mortally wounded by a tribal yukiyuko.

628 587 Shortly after this Warlumbopo walked into the camp of the dying man. Warlumbopo wailed for his dead brother. He refused to allow the wives of the dead man to bury him until he had killed the slayer of his wawa, when he returned to his dead brother and buried him.

When Daurlung, an older brother to Warlumbopo and younger to the dead man, heard the news he said, "We'll get all our Ritarngo people

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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and go fight them." "No," said Warlumbopo. He had not told Daurlung of his killing their brother's slayer since the latter had been a good friend of Daurlung's. Daurlung said, "Yes, we must go kill our brother's slayer." "You can't kill him now." "Why?" "He's dead." "Who killed him?" "I did." "My own brother! Good! I'll give you two of my wives."[5]

This episode not only illustrates the operation of the junior levirate during the life of an older brother, but shows clearly the solidarity among a group of consanguine brothers and its lack between "far-off" brothers.

Wawa always is at the head of a family of brothers and has the strongest voice in their affairs if the father is very old or dead. However, if wawa is not of an assertive type, whereas one of the younger brothers is, the latter could hold equal authority with him and frequently would have the final decision on any problem that confronted them.

The oldest brother, who has the rights of ceremonial leadership for certain of the clan and moiety ceremonies, usually has the next oldest help him, and they confer over ceremonial matters on an almost equal basis; but, given two personalities of equal strength, the older would be by virtue of his age the more powerful in family affairs.

Usually two brothers cooperate in making a canoe, since of all economic labors this is the most difficult and extends over the greatest period of time. A canoe, too, has the highest economic value of all the Murngin's technological articles. Wawa has the most control over the canoe, although yukiyuko, if a man of will, may have an equal say in its management. If it were traded to another group, all the brothers would feel they had an ownership in it, even if they had not helped make it.

The brothers usually have an equal right to the property of each, although it is definitely known that a spear, a club, a basket, or any other such article belongs to one man and not to the group. A dog is known to belong to one man; yet the other brothers have a feeling of secondary ownership, and the dog recognizes them as secondary masters, much as with us a boy may own a dog and receive primary obedience and loyalty from his pet, while his brothers are secondary masters. These latter would look upon the dog as their brother's, but as "ours" in relation to outsiders.

If a son of one brother dies, the others always join in the ceremonial

[5] There is a full account of this incident in Warlumbopo's life as a warrior in the chapter on warfare, pages 177-190.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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tribal law, the waku of gawel and the gurrong of mokul would have been the same person; with the wrong marriage a discord is created in the first ascending generation, and sometimes considerable time elapses before a woman is taken in marriage. 582

After marriage a young man usually lives for a short period of varying length with his parents-in-law. After this he may go to his own people and take his wife with him. There is often much protest by the wife when she leaves her parents, but they aid her husband. When a child is born, its parents, if not already with the wife's parents, return there so the grandparents can see the baby. This is only for the first child, although the parents of both the husband and wife are always pleased and anxious to see all the grandchildren. 591 [574]

When a girl leaves her parents for the first time, a younger brother accompanies her (see page 65), a custom called "okokork." (The sister's husband is also dué to her young brother, just as this younger brother is galle to his sister's dué.) The husband looks out for the younger man and assumes the place of a father to him during his residence there. 591 607

When a child is born the new union is greatly solidified; it now has become a fully developed family, and except for the wife's being stolen by another man there would be little chance of permanent rupture even if she ran away. Tribal sentiment would be against her and her paramour or anyone who might have stolen her. The children would seldom go with her in such a case, and the strong attachment a Murngin mother has for her offspring would force her to come back to them. The writer has recorded several instances of a woman's going through the most difficult privations and risking probable death to return to her children after she had been stolen by a man from another tribe. 851 587 626 [152]

If a camp has been ambushed and the men all killed in a general tribal war, the women and children are taken by the conquerors and given as wives to the men who are in the right relationship to them. 727

A man wants as many wives as he can get and still keep his peace with the other males of his clan. The average is about three and a half for middle-aged men; but there is a recorded case of one native with seventeen wives, the majority having been obtained by stealing them or killing their husbands. He also married "wrong." There is a close correlation of having many wives with fighting strength, or with being the son of a man powerful in war who had thereby acquired a large number of women whose brothers would be gawels to 595 554

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1957
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

generally frown upon the lovers' attempt. Further, her people consider it an affront to them by the people of her lover's clan, and it is necessary for them to protest that they had nothing to do with the matter and show good faith by helping get her back. A woman or a man can take the initiative in a runaway marriage, but most of the cases recorded were due to the influence of the woman.

Monalli had been the lover of another's wife. He had had trouble and had decided to return to his own clan. When he left, the wife went with him. He protested, when apprehended, that he did not want her and had asked her to remain with her own husband. The woman herself, although it meant a merciless beating, admitted she was the guilty one and still asked to be allowed to follow him.

Inyinyerri, a fine looking young man, ran away with Raiola's mokul ranuru (sister to the actual one) because they had been having an affair and because her dué's people had stolen Inyinyerri's own father's wives and he wished to even the mark. Inyinyerri's people protested that it would cause too much trouble, and he sent her back. A neutral man was given an opossum string with a loop at one end which was put over her head; and she was led to her gurrung, who brought her to her husband. When he accepted the string it was realized that he wanted her; had he cut the string it would have meant that he did not want her.

It occurs, but unusually, that a man who is stealing, or running away with, a woman uses the head circlet to take her.

If a galle mirik ran away and her father failed in forcing her back, it would be mandatory upon him to provide the dué (his waku) with a new galle, if he could not, he would try to help him obtain another and make presents to him for the loss. The same proceedings are gone through if a man's wife is childless.

If a husband runs away from his wife she goes to his people, usually to her mokul bapa (mother-in-law), for protection, and remains with the man's parents until his people bring him back, or she is given to a younger brother who is nearest of kin.

The author has recorded instances of a man's freely giving up his wife after she had run away.

Dauper, a youngster sixteen or eighteen years old, had a wife of about thirty-five who ran away with another. Her people brought her back to him. Her brother gave her a thorough beating, as did the husband, but the latter said, "He can have her, she causes me too much trouble. She's too old for me."

A custom halfway between a lovers' arrangement and a runaway

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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604 43 personality of the waku to his gawel. The gifts are always more numerous from the younger man to the older; but when a gawel receives ranga string, a ranga, or the hair belt, he must reciprocate by giving a return present to show his appreciation, or he would offend his waku.

604 582 When a gawel gives his daughter to his sister's son, this is not merely a gift, for the waku by tribal law has a right to her and would fight for her if the gawel tried to give her to someone else. He would also feel that he had the right to gawel's wife's second daughter and [587] the privilege of declining the offer of a third. There would be an obligation, too, on gawel to give his waku another wife if the first were barren or died before giving birth to a child. If a waku's wife runs away from him, his gawel would under almost all circumstances do everything possible to get her back for the husband. If he did not, he would feel obligated to give the waku another daughter in her place.

A gawel decides when the waku shall receive his daughter, or, in other words, he really determines when the tribe shall give its complete recognition to the marriage.

A group of brothers who were gawel would be divided up according to seniority among a group of waku who were brothers. The oldest gawel would have the oldest waku, and the next oldest gawel would have the next oldest waku. This is the ideal, naturally not always realized. Ideally, also, the first wife gives her first two daughters to the oldest waku and the next daughter to the next oldest waku.

[591] When a gawel decides to give recognition to a marriage of his daughter to a waku, he instructs his wife (mokul rumeru to the waku) to build a camp for the two, and for a time residence is matrilocal (see page 77).

604 584 431 When it is decided that a waku is to get a gawel's daughter, the gawel shows his pleasure by giving presents to his duć, who is the boy's father, and also to yeppa, his sister, who is the boy's mother. The boy's mother would receive more than the father. A gawel is pleased, because a waku is like a second son to him, and he has strengthened his position in the tribe by this marriage tie to another clan, whereas a daughter is of little use in time of war. A waku would be of great help, both because of himself and his brothers, and also because of waku's other relatives.

581 604 Such a relationship would also prevent trouble. "If my bapa and my gawel tried to fight, I'd stop them," is a favorite remark among the Murngin men. "I wouldn't know which one to help. I'd stop both

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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For a few days a mother carries her newborn child under her arm in a strip of paper bark. At this time she covers it with charcoal to make it turn black, for it is very light when born and it is thought that it will stay that color unless so painted. In a short time she holds her infant on her shoulder, its legs straddling her neck and its arms clinging to her head. She carries her children out into the bush with her while she gathers the plants, or shell food, for the family larder. When the little boy is about four years old he stays in camp with the other little ones. But the young girls continue going with their mothers, who during this early period start teaching them the countless things they must know about the fauna and flora, the land and the sea, in order to become good food-gatherers. When a boy is to be circumcised the mother always makes presents to the man who paints his body for the ceremony. When the son kills his first kangaroo or emu, the bones are painted and she carries them as she does those of a dead relative. This is to bring the son good luck in the hunt.

If the son's fathers are dead, the mother is sometimes consulted as to the proper time to circumcise him. When the boy returns from his journey to all the local clans, inviting them to come to his circumcision ceremony, it is she who brags about the number of presents given him. She always exaggerates because it is felt that this will also be helpful for the son in acquiring the good things in later life. While he is being circumcised she cries and beats herself. The actions are customary, but they are more than that to the mother, who is deeply affected when she hears her son's cries. The sisters to the mother act in the same way during this ceremony. A mother seldom corrects her child, this being left for mari and nati to do.

When a child is hurt or dead a mother always cuts and beats her head to show her grief. After the child is buried she paints herself with red ocher to cleanse herself of ceremonial impurity so that she can go out for wood and food with the other women. She waits until after burial to paint herself because the body would not decompose if she did it before. After the bones have been prepared for dispersal among the women she is one of the carriers and is usually the first to get them.

The child sees the mother's sisters as arndi not only because they are her sisters but because the father may die and the mother will be transferred to a younger brother of the father, or an older brother may die and his wives will be given to the child's father. In both cases the women would be arndi as wives to the child's father.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

Marriage and Relationship

578 595 In the social life of the people polygamy is generally practised, some men having as many as eight wives. While a good deal may be said in justification of this practice among a nomadic people, such as these aborigines are, it is a very fruitful cause of trouble and strife. This is occasioned by the jealousy which older wives frequently feel toward their younger tribal [589] sisters, and also by the fact that, because of this system, many young men of marriageable age are unable to obtain partners. This latter fact, not unnaturally, leads to the stealing of women and general breaches of the moral laws of the tribe.

562 627 672 684 One, to us, highly unjust custom is to punish a woman who has been stolen, even though she has been taken away by force, much more severely than the man who has stolen her. In most cases she is, when recovered, badly speared or beaten, in some cases so severely treated as to be killed, while the man who has taken her, unless he occupy a prohibited relationship to the woman, is usually let off with a severe lecturing.

627 684 Generally all the relatives of the wronged husband who are present will join in this brutal chastisement of the woman, their action being justified by the fact that they "feel sorry" for their fellow-tribesman. Perhaps experience has proved the value of this method of controlling domestic relationships.

582 584 Marriage, as previously indicated, is regulated by the social organisation of the tribe. There are only certain men of the opposite moiety who are eligible to become the husband of any particular girl or woman. To one of these men the girl is given in infancy, and, though this man has nothing directly to do with her until she reaches the age of puberty, he is required, during the years of her infancy and girlhood, to fulfil certain obligations, such as the making of presents of food, weapons or utensils, to her father.

[585] Because of this custom, there is nothing approaching a ceremony of marriage among these people, the girl during infancy as really belonging to the man as she will later on when he actually 587 768 takes her to wife. When a man dies, his wife or wives immediately pass over to one or more of his tribal brothers, so that, excepting in the case of a few very old women, there are no widows, and there are no orphans in this aboriginal community.

159 to feed her [give her to him]"; but if he is a greedy fellow he says, "No, I
584 want to keep her myself."

159 The black man's custom is different from the way white men are. A
[582] black man takes a wife when she is very young, sometimes before her
593 breasts have come. He sleeps with her, loves her, and does everything but
[826] have intercourse with her. This makes his girl want him and makes her breasts come large and start sticking out. That is before her blood comes.
[841] When blood first comes to a woman it is after she has copulated with a man for the first time. That is what causes it. She has blood a few more times, and then she has a baby, and then the blood stops.

159 If my wife gave me no children, I would go to my gawel and tell him. He
587 would say, "Wait a little while and I will give you another daughter of mine
595 so that you can have children." If my wife died, my father-in-law would give me another one right away. If he hasn't a grown daughter, he would wait until his little one got larger and then he would give that girl to me.

159 When my second wife got large enough her father and mother brought
595 her to me and said for her to stay with me and that I was her husband (pages 95-96). My first wife [the new wife's older sister] did not growl at me but kept very quiet when I was around. When I was away she growled at her little sister and told her to go on away. "Mahkarolla belongs to me and not to you." By and by my new wife told me about this. She also told her mother and father.

[626] They said to my first wife, "You must stop this quarreling with your sister. She is just the same as you. You are our daughter and she is our daughter. You have Mahkarolla for a husband, and we have given her to him and she has him for a husband. She is your young sister. You will now have someone to look out for the wood for you, and she can help you get food for your husband."

My wife kept quiet then. Those two sisters live together just like good friends. They never fight like the wives of some husbands do. They look out for each other's children.

159 When another gawel liked me he went to my proper father-in-law and
584 said, "I like that son-in-law that belongs to you. I would like to give him my daughter. He can be a son-in-law of mine, too." My gawel, because he is a good man, said, "You haven't promised that girl of yours to somebody else, have you?" If that man had said, "Yes," mine would have said, "No, you can't because that will make trouble for my son-in-law." That man said, "No," so my father-in-law said, "Yes."

159 My mother-in-law—I don't talk to her. I can't go close to her camp, can't
606 go pick up something close to her camp, can't take food from her. I can't give food to her straight; I must give it through my wife. When I am

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

CHAPTER EIGHT

Family Life in the Jungle

A FAMILY is the most important unit in aboriginal society, and the horde is founded on it. Some families have as few as three members; the largest I saw was that in which Wonggu had twenty-six wives and fifty children. A horde consists of a father's family and his sons' families, and if a few generations of sons escape their enemies' spears the horde is a large one. Upon this simple horde-family relationship depends the entire intricate, bewildering, and far-reaching aboriginal social organization.

Polygamy is an ancient custom and has an economic basis, for women are the chief food-gatherers and are coveted as assets and never regarded as expensive luxuries. A man cannot foresee the number of wives he is to have, but he hopes for several, and as his influence increases there is a tendency to bestow women on him. Bestowal of women is so arranged that old men obtain young wives and young men generally receive old widows, and incongruous as the arrangement may seem to us it ensures that old men have active women to hunt for them and their elderly wives, and that the young men, well able to look after themselves, make do with elderly widows. Prestige lies with the old men, and they enforce the practice despite constant objections from both the young men and the young women. As youths grow older their authority increases and they in turn bargain for young women.

Women live a much harder life than men, and are neglected and unwanted as they grow old before their time;

585 a week or ten days, till the husband takes her away to the bush, where they set up camp by themselves.

583 All negotiations for wives do not run smoothly, for if a prospective husband's horde quarrels with the horde of the father-in-law, the Inipi agreement will probably lapse, or if one tribal son-in-law offers better payment than another, the result is not hard to foresee. Our house-boy, Naradjin, wanted to buy a wife, but the father of the girl, though considering his suit and receiving gifts from him, was also negotiating with Baradjuna, who, despite being sixty years old and having eleven wives, had performed the Inipi rite and expected the girl to come to him. Both men stood in the correct tribal relationship to the girl, and the problem deteriorated into a question of who had the greater influence. At one stage, Baradjuna took the girl and cleared out, and the argument would probably have ended there had not the girl run back to her father. Tribal hostilities in a distant but related horde caused the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Baradjuna, and the balance finally swung in favour of Naradjin when the girl's father, in a moment of wrathful indignation, bestowed his daughter upon him.

•587 An aboriginal marries all the widows, childless or otherwise, of his deceased blood or tribal brother. Every woman usually stands in the relationship of wife to a number of men who are tribal brothers. She marries one of them and, if he dies, she and her children automatically enter the camp of another brother who has always been her tribal husband as well as a tribal father to her children. For this reason a man does not know the number of wives and half-grown children he is likely to acquire through the deaths of brothers, and irrespective of his personal views, desires or efforts toward obtaining a family, he has little say in the matter. Fortunately Stone Age women are not burdensome, for they are food-gatherers, and children are their responsibility.

583 Natural affinity between youths and the young wives of